

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:743

ANSWERED ON:21.11.2007

SETTING UP OF COMMITTEE TO STUDY SPREAD OF PLAGUE

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Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has constituted a Committee to study the spread of Plague epidemic in the country;
- (b) if so, the details of the report presented by the said Committee; and
- (c) the action taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS)

(a) The Government of India had constituted a Technical Advisory Committee on Plague in 1994. The terms of reference of the committee were

- i. To elucidate factors responsible for the outbreak of plague (1994) and its spread.
- ii. To advise on strategies, policies and programmes for the control of plague
- iii. To recommend steps for prevention and of such outbreaks in future.

(b) The Committee carried out a detailed study on the aetiological, clinical and epidemiological aspects of the outbreak of plague in Beed and Surat in 1994. Following were some of the main recommendations of the Committee:

- # A network of laboratories throughout the country must be identified for providing support to the diagnosis of infection. The surveillance must include surveillance of emerging drug resistance of plague and other pathogens.
- # NICD and the network should be involved in a continuous process of training and re-training of professionals and technicians in the investigation of plague outbreaks and in establishing aetiology.
- # The capacity of continuous surveillance of animals and human populations for plague within the overall infectious disease surveillance system has to be developed and maintained. The State and district health services should be the focal points of this system with assistance from the NICD and the national laboratory network.
- # The capacity to respond to plague outbreaks in humans and plague epizootics must be ensured through the development of epidemiologic, ecologic and laboratory investigative capacity.
- # There is a need for building a well trained cadre of epidemiologists in the country and in this, medical colleges, schools of public health and specialized institutions devoted to the study of infectious diseases under the ICMR, NICD, DBT and DST will have to play an important role.
- # The value of continuous interaction of the national networks with international networks under WHO and others must be maintained.

(c) Accordingly, a multipronged approach is adopted to prevent occurrence of plague, involving improvement of environmental sanitation, rodent and vector control by using insecticides, increasing public awareness etc. The continuous surveillance of plague has helped in preventing its occurrence. In this regard, the plague surveillance activities of State Plague control units of endemic states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal constituted to detect the evidence of plague antibodies among wild and peri-domestic rodents are coordinated by the field unit of NICD in Bangalore. The representatives of these states hold regular coordination meetings to review the status of plague surveillance. The last such meeting was held in October 2006 at Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

A National Surveillance Programme for Communicable Diseases (NSPCD) was launched during IX Plan which covered 101 districts. Integrated Disease Surveillance Project (IDSP) has been launched in November 2004 in phased manner with the objective to strengthen the surveillance activities in order to promote early detection of outbreak and to initiate appropriate action for prevention and control of diseases. Plague has been included as target disease for regular surveillance under IDSP.